#9

A Dissertation on Rheumatism

By Thomas M. Stout

of Dover

Delaware

Locust & 8th NW

admitted March 19th 1822

Am
body there
degree of co
tendency;
greater pa
they seldom
instance,
suffering,
lar estima
to establis
who righ
demande
the found
noble a
such di
distressing
ient wil
Of this c
the presen

R

Rheumatism. | March 19. 1842

Among the diseases incident to the human body, there are some which excite an uncommon degree of commiseration on account of their fatal tendency; whilst others, though occasioning far greater pain, fail to excite much sympathy, because they seldom terminate in dissolution. In neither instance, is it usual to take the guage of actual suffering, or calculate its duration. This popular estimation of the character of diseases, seems to establish a scale of exertion for the physician, who rightly judges that his mightiest efforts are demanded against those disorders, which sap the foundations of life. It is, nevertheless, a noble achievment of "the healing art", to expel such diseases as, though not dangerous, are distressing and severe, and fasten upon the patient with the most enduring pertinacity. Of this class is Rheumatism, the subject of the present Thesis.

Rheumatism is a disease of cold cli-

rates. Am
e vicissitu
and active.
to degree in
t United S
is fairly to
more preva
to ocean.

The gene
affecting the
its attack o
agent, or aft
ter from wo
companied
stances hav
ered much
ing free fro
ed by old a
the disease
the patients

mates. Among its remote causes, atmospheric vicissitudes are perhaps the most powerful and active. And as this cause exists in a greater degree in the northern and eastern parts of the United States, than in any country in Europe, it is fairly to be presumed, that the disease itself is more prevalent here, than upon the other side of the ocean.

The general cause of rheumatism, is cold affecting the surface. The disease commences its attack often upon sudden exposure to this agent, or after a considerable change of the weather from warm to cold, particularly when accompanied by a damp atmosphere. But instances have occurred, of persons, who had suffered much exposure in their youth, remaining free from rheumatic affections until visited by old age, which came accompanied by the disease in question; and in these instances, the patients themselves, have with great confi-

dence a
to their
soldiers
ed with
were the
of that
admitted
disease,
often dep

As
ther it be
does not
its situa
the joint
in princi
first, it
gle joint
pectedly
ed, to a n
expectedly

dence and plausibility, ascribed the complaint to their early hardships. Thus I have heard soldiers of the Revolution, when recently seized with rheumatic pains, say that these were the effects of the fatigues and sufferings of that remote period. It may also be admitted as a settled truth in the history of this disease, that like gout, consumption &c. it often descends from parent to child.

As to the precise seat of rheumatism, whether it be the muscle, the ligaments, or the membranes, does not appear to be satisfactorily ascertained. Its situation, however, is chiefly in the region of the joints. It differs from gout, among other things, in principally attacking the larger joints. At first, it usually invades ~~the larger joints~~ a single joint, sometimes two or more; often it unexpectedly passes from the joint originally attacked, to a neighbouring one, from which it as unexpectedly returns. It attacks persons of all

ages and
aged and
usually
or aching
extending
bly are sy
the tendo
a degree,
venience
lar. In
sudden;
lent mus
preceded
toms, suc
ness of th
A
tonic an
into acu
T
case, whe

ages and constitutions, though the middle aged and those of plethoric habits, are most usually its subjects. It is distinguished by acute or aching pains affecting the joints and sometimes extending to the adjacent muscles, which probably are sympathetically affected. I have known the tendo Achillis to be also thus affected to such a degree, as to produce extreme pain and inconvenience. Its modes of approach are very irregular. In some instances, its attacks are quite sudden; sometimes it immediately succeeds violent muscular exertion; and sometimes it is preceded ~~by~~ for many days, by premonitory symptoms, such as general lassitude and debility, stiffness of the limbs, and shooting pains.

Rheumatism is divided into two species, tonic and atonic, or according to Doctor Cullen, into acute and chronic rheumatism.

Tonic rheumatism is that form of the disease, which is attended with increased arterial

action, loc
Whether th
the local i
terial to in
precedes th
such insta
ble shew of
this local
whilst it p
phlegmono
that it ne
been ingen
mation an
the parts
ted, if we
hus, since
tion; but
to conceive
tion. T
sometimes

action, local inflammation, redness and tension. Whether the pyrexia is the cause or consequence of the local inflammation, it is perhaps not very material to inquire. It is certain that it occasionally precedes the inflammation of the parts, though in such instances, it may be ascribed with considerable shew of reason, to disorders of the stomach. But this local inflammation of tonic rheumatism, whilst it possesses many of the characteristics of phlegmonous inflammation, differs from it in this, that it never terminates in suppuration. It has been ingeniously suggested that rheumatic inflammation and tension, are relieved by an effusion from the parts inflamed. This suggestion may be admitted, if we suppose the substance effused to be flatus, since air in a cavity does not produce irritation; but if the effusion is a liquid, it is difficult to conceive why it does not terminate in suppuration. The pyrexia which obtains in rheumatism, sometimes rises to a considerable height, differing

its degree
l by the p
the fever o
wards even
the motio
ring the
Atoni
is, that it
parts, n
it, is, ho
ame; and
with those
receding,
type, we c
ame dise
its concom
ion. T
ther with
bom regu
Have

in its degree according to the space and part affected by the principal disease. An exacerbation of the fever occurs and every symptom is aggravated towards evening, one of the leading causes of which is the motion, to which the patient is subject during the day.

Atonic rheumatism differs from tonic in this, that it is not attended by inflammation of the parts, nor by pyrexia. The sensation produced by it, is, however, similar; its situation is the same; and from these circumstances connected with those of its great obstinacy and of its never preceding, but following upon the heels of the tonic type, we are induced to believe that it is the same disease in fact with the tonic, divested of its concomitants of fever and local inflammation. The attendant symptoms, however, together with the peculiar treatment which each form requires, justify the distinction.

Having spoken of the cause and character

of this mos
too obvious
ced to spea
The b
ted by the f
vision alre
ing it wit
parent, wh
it, in this,
& rheumat
from the m
tism, and
& feeble f
ing the sy
tead of be
tonic st
tenacity.
In the
the prop
which is

of this most painful disease, both of which are too obvious to call for much disquisition, I proceed to speak of its treatment.

The treatment of rheumatism is to be regulated by the form of the disease, according to the division already stated. The propriety of attacking it with energy in its tonic form must be apparent, when it is considered, that by repelling it, in this, which is in truth, the incipient stage of rheumatism, the patient is effectually saved from the more obstinate form of atonic rheumatism, and that, on the other hand, if by a course of feeble practice, we succeed in barely alleviating the symptoms of the tonic, the disease instead of being subdued, settles down into the atonic state, in which it possesses tenfold tenacity.

In the first place, in order to give due effect to the proper remedies in tonic rheumatism, which is highly inflammatory, rest and an

antiphlogi
of these re
which sho
state of th
substitute
of the mos
those whic
dangerou
with toni
matily r
inflamm
the diseas
to destroy
Hence too
an over-
way inju
the opin
producc
matism
Cath

antiphlogistic regimen, are required. At the head of these remedies, we are bound to place the lancet, which should be boldly employed, so long as the state of the pulse indicates venesection. All substitutes for this remedy, are but the exchange of the most efficacious and safe means of cure, for those which are more feeble and really more dangerous in the end. Because by tampering with tonic rheumatism, though we may ultimately remove the symptoms of pyrexia and inflammation, we remove nothing else, and the disease which we have been endeavouring to destroy, meets us in a more invincible shape. Hence too, the propriety of copious bloodletting. An over-timorous use of the lancet is in the same way injurious, and has I believe given rise to the opinion that bleeding in this disease, produces slow recoveries and chronic rheumatism.

Cathartics are valuable auxiliaries of

phlebotom
are consid
but when
of senna &
of a wine
been found
diuretic a
gia, combi
been produ
Emetic
particular
pear to a
and produ
pressions.
promote
Diap
rheumate
great cau
rheumat
reduced

phlebotomy. Mercurial and saline purges are considered the best at the commencement, but when the disease has abated, a decoction of senna & senega ℥ii aa, taken cold in doses of a wineglass full several times a day, has been found eminently beneficial. It proves both diuretic and purgative. Flo. sulp. and magnesia, combined and used with care, have likewise been productive of good effects.

Emetics may also be used with advantage, particularly in miasmatic districts. They appear to arouse a proper degree of healthy action, and produce a susceptibility of remedial impressions. They determine to the surface, and promote diaphoresis.

Diaphoretics are valuable remedies in rheumatism; but they are to be used with great caution. In the early stage of tonic rheumatism before the phlogistic diathesis is reduced by the means above described, dia-

phoretics
voided. E
riod, has b
But ~~when~~
been judic
administer
tice will,
those diap
and those
not to be
tism. The
and of thes
also combi
the form of
stand high
Thes
calculati
Park and
deputation
esteemed in

phoretics would be injurious and are to be a-
voided. Even involuntary sweating, at this pe-
riod, has been found to aggravate the symptoms. -
But ~~when~~ after venesection and cathartics have
been judiciously employed, diaphoretics may be
administered with good effect. A proper prac-
tice will, however, still discriminate between
those diaphoretics which are highly stimulant,
and those of milder operation; for the former are
not to be used at any stage of tonic rheuma-
tism. The best are such as act upon the skin,
and of these sulphur has been much approved;
also combinations of ipecacuenha and opium in
the form of Dovers powder, and nitrous powders,
stand high.

These are the leading remedies, which are
calculated to act upon the system in general.
Park and arsenic, which have possessed much
reputation in European practice, are not so highly
esteemed in this country as remedies in tonic rheu-

matism
these gener
are most
cal blood
also frictio
ficients, m
there is sig
of tartar e
pisms an
The c
the tonic, a
ing accou
mation.
form of t
sis, and
This diff
ference o
that the
employed
a healthy

matism. When the system has been fitted by these general depletory remedies, the parts affected are next to be attended to. At this period, topical blood-letting will be found eminently useful, also friction of the parts with the application of rubifacients, mercurial inunction particularly when there is rigidity or muscular contraction, plaisters of tartar emetic, pressure by flannel rollers, sinapisms and blisters.

The Atonic rheumatism is distinguished from the tonic, as we have before mentioned, in not being accompanied by pyrexia and local inflammation. Instead of these, there prevails in this form of the disease, an antiphlogistic diathesis, and the parts affected are cold and stiff. This difference indicates a correspondent difference of treatment; and we accordingly find that the object of the most approved remedies employed in Chronic rheumatism, is to restore a healthy tone to the System in general, and

in particu

For the

which is

purging

chronic

phur are

pepper u

stimulan

vegetable

exhibited

Diaph

form of th

mainly o

ment. T

been empl

which ac

producing

alkali, a

turbinthe

dies of the

in particular, to the seat of the disease.

For the purpose of diffusing excitement, which is chiefly withdrawn to the blood vessels, purging is very useful. In low states of chronic rheumatism, bark, arsenic, and sulphur are said to be beneficial. Cayenne pepper used in the form of pills is cordially stimulant, and improves digestion; and other vegetable tonics may be advantageously exhibited.

Diaphoretics are also prescribed in this form of the disease. Their utility depends mainly on their power in equalizing excitement. For this purpose the most active have been employed. Those are most approved which act chiefly upon the surface without producing much sweat, such as the volatile alkali, volatile tinct. of guiacum, and the turbinthenate preparations. Of all the remedies of this class, the savine seems to bear the

palm. A
exciting
versal gl
over the
weak an
slow. B
formed, c
is judic
arly cal
coldness
tremities
cold cla
those ins
remedies
will not
the flesh
to other
may be
dapted t
tion in the

palm. It stimulates the whole system and exciting little or no perspiration, causes a universal glow; and exerts so happy an influence over the circulation, that the pulse from being weak and frequent, becomes strong, full, and slow. But these important effects, we are informed, can only be expected, when the medicine is judiciously exhibited. Its use is peculiarly called for in those cases, where there is coldness of the surface & especially of the extremities; when the joints are covered with a cold clammy moisture; and generally in those instances, in which the rubifacient remedies are usually recommended. Flannel next to the skin and general friction with the flesh brush, will prove an important aid to other remedies. Such local applications may be advantageously employed as are adapted to produce excitement and healthy action in the parts; namely, sinapisms, oil of-

of turpent
curial in
roller, fr
stances, p
incture
Anot
sed in s
or tepido
ble. The
mended, a
losure t
of the dea
ice; bu
experienc
goes to p
the salin
lanced b
patient
nerally,
rheuma

of turpentine, the rubifacients generally —, mercurial inunction, electricity, the flannel roller, friction with slightly vesicating substances, plaisters of tartarized antimony & the tincture of Canthardes.

Another remedy which has been often used in rheumatism, is the bath, either cold or tepid. The former is scarcely ever advisable. The sea bath has been sometimes recommended, and if it could be had without exposure to the cool and damp atmosphere of the seashore, it might be of essential service; but, I apprehend, that the general experience of the patients who have tried it, goes to prove that the benefits resulting from the saline properties of this bath, are over-balanced by the damp and cold to which the patient is subjected. Of the cold bath generally, it may be observed, that in tonic rheumatism, it excites, and in the atonic,

it depres
it tends t
bid diat
In co
I take th
of the Su
which a
mation,
the prepa
of 1820.
County, c
is used in
actively
in regar
it for so
the case
whether
the syste
spring,
water a

it depresses, the system, so that in each case it tends to foster, instead of subduing the morbid diathesis.

In connexion with this part of the subject, I take the liberty of adding a short account of the Sulphur and Hot Springs of Virginia which are used with excellent effect in rheumatism, and some of which I visited under the pressure of this disease, in the Summer of 1820. The Sulphur Spring in Green Briar County, commonly called the White Sulphur is used internally, and is very penetrating and actively purgative. It is an interesting fact in regard to this water, that after drinking it for some time, silver worn in the pocket & the cases of silver watches are blackened; whether in consequence of the saturation of the system or of the atmosphere around the spring, I leave it to others to determine. The water as I was informed has been analyzed

by an A
tain as it
phur and
ected gas
it passes
course, it
rin, whic
other cate
is much
many Ch
and bilio
used as a
patient h
to cleanse
other good
cement
to the A
indeed be
cases to
County as

by an Italian chemist, and discovered to contain as its principal mineral ingredients, sulphur and magnesia. Though emitting sulphuretted gas, it is not disagreeable to the taste. As it passes out of the spring and winds along its course, it deposits a substance resembling magnesia, which is applied to ringworms, tetter, and other cutaneous eruptions. The White Sulphur is much resorted to by persons afflicted with many chronic diseases, with rheumatism, gout and bilious affections. In rheumatism, it is used as an introductory remedy. After the patient has drunk sufficiently of this water to cleanse his stomach & bowels, and to feel the other good effects of it in the wholesome excitement which it diseminates, he repairs to the Hot Springs in Bath County. It might indeed be deemed prudent in very delicate cases to take the Warm Spring in the same County as an intermediate step; but whether

from an
whatever
healthy
consist of
temperat
the third
Above th
house fr
which a
kets. Af
from 8 to
in this sp
he is care
remains
diaphoresi
incredible
thing I c
kets are
internal
again pla

from an experience of its inefficacy or from whatever cause, I found this a resort of the healthy and fashionable only. The Hot Springs consist of three fountains, all differing in temperature, one being 96°, another 98°, and the third 108° of Farenheit's Thermometer. Above the last mentioned, is erected a small house furnished with a number of beds, which are plentifully supplied with blankets. After the patient has been immersed from 8 to 15 minutes, (few can stay so long in this Spring which is called the Boiler,) he is carefully covered up in a bed where he remains an hour or longer. By these means diaphoresis is effected to an extent almost incredible to relate, and far beyond any thing I ever witnessed elsewhere. The blankets are removed one by one, allowing a short interval between each removal; the patient again plunges for a minute or two, into the

bath, afte
ly dry we
cise, does
When
in this ma
use of the
the Red
storative.
visit; nor
ever been
our observ
veral wa
ceedingly
though. I
main long
trial in
I sh
a remedy
city, which
fit in ato

bath, after which he wipes himself perfectly dry with flannel, and if disposed to exercise, does so at pleasure, either riding or walking.

When this bath has been used for 10 or 15 days in this manner, it has been recommended to make use of the Sweet Spring a chalybeate water, or of the Red Sulphur, which is said to be highly restorative. This last mentioned spring I did not visit; nor do I know whether its water has ever been analyzed. — I am satisfied from my own observation and experience, that these several waters used in the way described are exceedingly beneficial to rheumatic patients, though I regret to say, that I did not remain long enough to give them a perfect trial in my own case.

I shall conclude by remarking that a remedy has recently been introduced in this city, which promises to be of the greatest benefit in atonic rheumatism. I allude to

sulphuro
glowing
and, act
seem to co
most app
of their c

sulphurous fumigations, which kindle a glowing excitement throughout the system; and, acting immediately upon the skin, seem to comprize all the best properties of the most approved diaphoretics, without any of their countervailing effects.